



CITY OF LEMON GROVE

Office of the Mayor

"Best Climate On Earth"

July 8, 2020

As an elected official, I am quickly recognized as the first black woman Mayor to serve the City of Lemon Grove and in the entire County of San Diego, mom of two daughters who are destined to become future leaders and wife for 26 years to a retired United States Navy veteran. But when you peel back all of these layers to the core of my value system, you will see that beyond the color of my skin and labels, I am human. I am a compassionate and spirited soul who loves helping people, all people, through public service.

As a black woman leader, I care. I care about the values we all share. These values are freedom, equality and justice for all which are important components of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence and are echoed in our laws today. But when these values are compromised, it slows down our ability to live and thrive in pursuit of the American Dream.

Black Americans measure our progress in pursuit of the American Dream from the slaves who fought for freedom in the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement that inspired the world to change. While these achievements are meaningful, impactful and significant, all black Americans continue to experience systemic racism. Systemic racism through written policies, practices and procedures designed to barricade access to good quality education, job, housing and healthcare.

No one wants to be confronted with a disaster, be it natural or human. The onset of COVID-19 forced every American, regardless of your background, to reassess the founding values of America and to have the real conversation about our overall health and well-being, education, jobs and strength of our economy. The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and on a local level, the encounter of Amaurie Johnson at the Grossmont Trolley Station elevated the conversation to include the safety of black Americans, injustice, race relations and human rights.

Systemic racism is real and we must deal with it. Yes, we are different, imperfect and human, let's own it! As a leader, I know that when we reach critical mass, it is important to make adjustments to align our policies and procedures in support of our core American values. I know that more equitable outcomes for everyone can be achieved if we dig down deep to have uncomfortable conversations to explore the root cause of racism and inequality. When we know better, we can do better. This is the only way we will be able to eliminate racial disparities in support of the American dream.

In 1930, the United States' first recognized court-ordered school desegregation case surfaced from a small town in California called Lemon Grove. The school board attempted to segregate 75 Mexican children to be educated in a separate school building. On March 30, 1931, the Superior Court of San Diego ruled it was illegal to segregate children. This case set precedence for the Supreme Court's landmark case, Brown vs. Board of Education.

While I have experienced some very dark days in my lifetime, I often think about these words that were shared by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." These words continue to make me hopeful. I am hopeful that we will begin to turn to each other and not on each other, going from clenched fist to holding hands, standing side by side in unity with the voices of change who are protesting daily. Our ability to do this will determine how we move forward and it is the only way we can and will get through this challenging time. It will be difficult and it won't be easy, but we can do this!

We know that the time is right to do what is right. The time is right to support the American dream by making sure our children have access to quality education and technology. We can work together to support skilled labor and local businesses opportunities for everyone. Working together, we can ensure everyone has access to capital for investment in real property and business ventures in support of sustainable communities.

I believe our best work in supporting the American dream is in developing solutions through our combined efforts. Now is the time for us to reach across racial lines and age demographics to reduce the misery index. Let's unite now to end systemic racism in support of our American dream!

Sincerely,



Racquel Vasquez,
Mayor